



# Weekly Hot News Update

June 11, 2008

Volume 4, Number 22

## On the Hill

Here's what we're tracking this week for EUCOM.

### *Bills of Interest:*

#### **HR 1585** - National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008

- This bill would establish and fund counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.
- Pocket vetoed by the President on December 31, 2007.
- Agreed to by a voice vote in the House on January 15.

#### **HR 2003** - Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007

- This bill would encourage and facilitate consolidation of security, human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. This would include counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- This bill was received in the Senate, after passage in the House on October 3.

#### **HR 2228** - Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Bill

- Closely related to HR 2003 this bill would also encourage the development of Ethiopia while also implementing counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

#### **HR 2446** - Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007

- This bill provides funding for programs to stabilize Afghanistan and counter the drug trade.
- This bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate, which referred it to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

#### **HR 2764** - Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008

- This bill includes appropriations for "international narcotics control and law enforcement."
- Became public law on December 26, 2007. Public Law No. 110-161.

### *Hearings of Interest:*

June 11 - House Appropriations Committee, Homeland Security Subcommittee markup of its FY2009 appropriations bill.

Time and Location: TBA

### *Whispers from Congress:*

The Iraq/Afghanistan war spending supplemental will once again dominate the lawmaking agenda this week. In the House, the wartime spending bill is the top ticket item and Democrats hope to forge agreements on whether to include offsets for a package of veterans' educational benefits and whether to keep several Senate-backed domestic spending elements in the bill. The House will also work on deciding whether or not to reauthorize NASA and Amtrak. The Senate is expected to work on a pile of domestic items including energy, tax and Medicare legislation. With the passing of the budget last week, appropriations mark-ups are also expected to commence this week. Although, buzz from the hill indicates that straining relationships between appropriators, parties and between the White House and the Hill may make it difficult to get things passed. With campaigns and the November elections around the corner, expect the typical summer slow-down to be even slower.

## *Inside the Administration*

The big news this week from the White House is the President's farewell trip to Europe where he'll meet with leaders from countries across the continent including France, Germany, Italy, the UK and Slovenia. Sources indicate that even as European leaders begin to look beyond the Bush administration to next January, great shifts in relations across the Atlantic will most likely not occur. Interestingly, on Friday May 30<sup>th</sup>, the President issued sanctions against both the terror group the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Italian organized crime group, the N'drangheta. The PKK is reputed to be heavily involved in the Eastern European drug trade and the N'drangheta is suspected to be a major player in the importation of cocaine into Western Europe. The sanctions are being imposed in an effort to cut each respective group's access to outside funding sources and U.S. financial systems. In other news, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has nominated Gen. Norton A. Schwartz to be the next Air Force Chief of Staff. Gen. Schwartz would be the first non-fighter pilot to become the Air Force Chief of Staff in more than 25 years. Secretary Gates also named Michael Donley to be the Secretary of the Air Force, the department's top civilian. In nominating a non-fighter pilot to the chief of staff position, it has been speculated that the Secretary is attempting to shake up the Air Force and attempting to shift mission focus to better support the current ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. TCG will stay on top of all developments as they transpire.

## *Washington Influences*

In the latest issue of the World Defense Review, Dr. J. Peter Pham has published an interesting opinion piece supporting increased attention and investment in the African continent. Essentially, his article makes the case that building ties with African partners is in the national interest and that any successful effort in Africa will require steady, long-term planning and involvement. Dr. Pham also provides his assessment on what the future presidential administration may have in store in terms of continued African engagement. According to Dr. Pham, Senator McCain has appeared to put forth the most detailed plans and positive long-term solutions to working with African nations. Enhanced trade and investment were mentioned as two key components to building economic, social and political stability in the continent. Along with foreign investment and economic growth, public buy-in is crucial to implementing and executing successful programs. This is simply because, as Dr. Pham points out, "no foreign policy, however correct, is sustainable without public buy-in." Of course, with all of this in mind, no economic or cultural renaissance will flourish unless security and stability are established first. Ultimately, all of the elements go hand in hand. Dr. Pham also correctly points out that any involvement in Africa must not discount, neglect or abandon U.S. national interests. With this in mind, Africa, and many other developing regions in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Central Asia are not only within American national interests but within the immediate interests of European allies as well.

To view the entire article, please access the following link.  
<http://worlddefensereview.com/pham060508.shtml>

## *Around the Corner*

The Zimbabwe elections loom ever-closer...and more evidence comes to light indicating that prospects for change in the country are dim. Last week, in addition to angering instances of hostility towards U.S. diplomatic personnel, opposition leaders hinted that the June 27 run-off elections would do little to change the depressing social, economic and political situations in the country. Simba Makoni, an unsuccessful candidate in the March 29 elections, recently remarked that the elections should be delayed until the conditions in Zimbabwe improve enough to ensure that the voting process is free and fair. According to Makoni, "Conditions have been created in the country as a whole, but particularly in the rural areas, where there is no prospect of any semblance of a free and fair election." Makoni also added that regardless of who wins the run-off, the situation in Zimbabwe would remain largely unchanged. Ongoing

economic instability and political turmoil could have profound impacts on both the country itself and the region at large. Exorbitant levels of refugees leaving Zimbabwe for neighboring countries are not only a huge security concern but these groups could be preyed upon by transnational criminal elements. Dreadful economic conditions in Zimbabwe are also conducive to high levels of corruption. Additionally, when faced with severely limited legitimate income prospects, desperate populations often turn to crime and drug trafficking for survival. Needless to say, Zimbabwe will be watched.

### [Selected News for EUCOM](#)

- [West Africa Needs More Help to Fight Drug Trafficking](#)
- [Africa-Based Extremists Threaten Europe: EU Official](#)
- [Climate, Arms, Drugs Make Lethal Mix in Sahel](#)
- [Prince William set for Showdown with Drugs Baron on Royal Navy Patrol in Caribbean](#)
- [The Threat to the UK from Serious Organized Crime](#)

### [The Lighter Side](#)

#### [Quote of the Week](#)

***“The noblest motive is the public good.”***

***-Virgil***

***“Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.”***

***-Tennyson***

#### [Prediction of the Week](#)

***The NBA finals are in full swing and TCG boldly predicts that the Celtics will come out on top over the Lakers to win the Championship with 5 wins, claiming their victory in game 6 at home in Boston***

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